New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1955

Volume XVI, Number 16 • Rachel W. Coffin, *Editor* • Week of October 3, 1955

1955 PRODUCTIONS
Premieres in Other Years
Original Reviews Appeared In These Volumes

Stage Play	1954 Vol.	*Page*
Anastasia		192
Anniversary Waltz		339
Bad Seed (The)		223
*Boy Friend (The)		299
Caine Mutiny Court Martial (The)		382
Dear Charles		316
*Fanny		256
Flowering Peach (The)		196
House of Flowers		189
Lunatics and Lovers		219
Mrs. Patterson		231
*Pajama Game (The)		324
Peter Pan		273
Quadrille		259
Rainmaker (The)		264
Reclining Figure		294
Saint of Bleecker Street (The)		199
Sandhog		239
Tender Trap (The)		282
Wedding Breakfast		243
What Every Woman Knows		208
*Witness for the Prosecution		216
	1953 Vol.	
Can-Can		304
Kismet		198
Solid Gold Cadillac (The)		222
Tea and Sympathy		266
*Teahouse of the August Moon (The)		254
	1952 Vol.	
Seven Year Itch (The)		186
	1951 Vol.	
Fourposter (The)		190

**Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of October 3, 1955*

1955 PRODUCTIONS
Premieres During 1955

Reviews Appear in This Volume

Stage Play	*Page*
All in One	325
Almost Crazy	298
Ankles Aweigh	329
*Bus Stop	346
*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof	342
Catch a Star!	290
Champagne Complex	334
*Damn Yankees	310
Dark Is Light Enough (The)	357
*Day by the Sea (A)	279
Desperate Hours (The)	370
Doctor's Dilemma (The)	397
Festival	393
Grand Prize (The)	385
Henry IV, Part I	282
Honeys (The)	314
*Inherit the Wind	322
Iolanthe	275
Master Builder (The)	349
Once Upon a Tailor	305
Othello	285
Phoenix '55	317
*Plain and Fancy	382
Seventh Heaven	302
*Silk Stockings	354
Skin of Our Teeth (The)	293
Southwest Corner (The)	374
3 For Tonight	337
Time of Your Life (The)	390
Tonight in Samarkand	365
*View From the Bridge (A)	272
Wayward Saint (The)	362
Wisteria Trees (The)	377

CRITIC'S CIRCLE AWARD 340

Theatre Openings

"Henry IV, Part I" — "Othello"
"A Day by the Sea" — "Iolanthe"
"A View From the Bridge"

**Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of October 3, 1955*

Theatre Critics' Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York newspapers.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK MIRROR
NEW YORK WORLD TELEGRAM & THE SUN
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK TIMES

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"A View From the Bridge"

Daily Mirror

September 30, 1955

Robert Coleman's THEATRE:

Twin Bill at Coronet Fine for Box Office

• 'A Memory of Two Mondays' is good but 'A View From the Bridge' will draw patrons.

The last bill of one-act plays that we can recall on Broadway was presented by Maurice Evans at the Coronet Theatre. Thursday evening Kermit Bloomgarden, Robert Whitehead and Roger L. Stevens brought another pair to the same house. They are both by Arthur Miller: "A Memory of Two Mondays" and "A View from the Bridge."

The former has to do with the employees of an auto parts warehouse in Manhattan, back in the early 30s. It's a grimy, dusty joint, and they are all pretty depressed about it. Some of them are even driven to drink. The youngest, however more determined than the rest, escapes to a college campus.

LIKE SO MANY modern writers, Miller has gone Chekhovian on us in this one. There is a lot of talk, accurate and salty talk, and little action. The dialogue is such that the average parents are not going to want to subject their teen-agers to it. Even though, from what we are hearing about them today, they know more of those dubious words than Miller.

We liked particularly J. Carrol Naish as a bibulous, argumentative, pot-bellied old lecher, who has some sentiment beneath, his rough exterior. There's also a swell performance by Biff McGuire as a frustrated Irishman who can reel off poetry in castoff shoes and with vine leaves in his hair.

There are other good contributions by Leo Penn, David Clarke, Eileen Heckart, Gloria Marlowe, Russell Collins, Van Heflin, Jack Warden, Richard Davalos, Antony Vorno and Curt Conway.

"A VIEW FROM the Bridge" is set in Brooklyn's Red Hook district, and deals with the Sicilian immigrants living there. To use a cliche, it's "a slice of life"—violent, realistic and sensational, what Italian opera librettists call verismo. It should be the item on the program that will make the Coronet's turnstiles click for quite a spell.

A dock walloper and his wife bring a couple of her nephews over from Italy illegally. He considers one of them effeminate, because the kid has platinum hair, likes to sing, can cook and do a little sewing. But he becomes insanely jealous when his ward falls for the too-good-looking "submarine."

He claims to suspect that the interloper and rival wants to marry her merely to obtain American citizenship, and, to prove that he's effete, embraces and kisses him. This failing to convince the girl, he tips off the immigration authorities and gets himself killed by the boy's vengeful older brother.

HEFLIN DOMINATES this one, with Naish, Warden, Vorno, the Misses Heckart and Marlowe offering highly emotional and effective performances.

Boris Aronson has designed a couple of atmospheric settings, while Martin Ritt's direction has emphasized the note of hopelessness in the first piece and the raw drama in the second.

During "A Memory of Two Mondays," we kept wondering how that auto parts company had been kept solvent over so many years, what with most of the hired hands doing more talking and tippling than toil. This seemed to baffle some of the first-nighters, who reserved their cheers for the gripping, elemental fireworks of "The Bridge."

Frankly, this double bill proved to be something that we, personally, could take or leave. But we predict that it will break the jinx on one-acters. For, judging by the enthusiasm of the initial customers, it spells box-office.

"A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE"

Two plays by Arthur Miller; staged by Martin Ritt; production designed by Boris Aronson; costumes by Helene Pons; lighting by Leland Watson; presented by Kermit Bloomgarden, Robert Whitehead and Roger L. Stevens at the Coronet Theatre, September 29, 1955. The cast:

"A Memory of Two Mondays"

Bert.....Leo Penn
Raymond.....David Clarke
Agnes.....Eileen Heckart
Patricia.....Gloria Marlowe
Gus.....J. Carrol Naish
Jim.....Russell Collins
Kenneth.....Biff McGuire
Larry.....Van Heflin
Frank.....Jack Warden
Jerry.....Richard Davalos
William.....Antony Vorno
Tom.....Curt Conway
Mechanic.....Tom Pedi
Mister Eagle.....Ralph Bell

"A View From the Bridge"

Louis.....David Clarke
Mike.....Tom Pedi
Alfieri.....J. Carrol Naish
Eddie.....Van Heflin
Catherine.....Gloria Marlowe
Beatrice.....Eileen Heckart
Marco.....Jack Warden
Tony.....Antony Vorno
Rodolpho.....Richard Davalos
1st Immigration Officer.....
Curt Conway
2nd Immigration Officer.....
Ralph Bell
Mr. Lipari.....Russell Collins
Mrs. Lipari.....Anne Driscoll
Two "Submarines".....
Leo Penn and Milton Carney

New York Post

September 30, 1955

By Richard Watts Jr.

Those New Plays by Arthur Miller

Drama critics, I suppose, should be cold and austere judges, issuing their objective verdicts without the weakness of personal emotional involvement. It's an ideal that I am unable to reach. I went to see Arthur Miller's much-heralded two new plays, "A View From the Bridge" and "A Memory of Two Mondays," which opened last night at the Coronet Theater, eagerly hoping and expecting that I was going to find one of America's most important dramatists at his characteristic best. It seems to me that he wasn't, and it caused me not only disappointment but acute unhappiness.

The first, and frankly less important, of the pair is "A Memory of Two Mondays." It is a mood piece, dealing rather diffusely with the troubled men and women working in the shipping room of an auto parts warehouse in Manhattan. It has credible atmosphere, a sense of brooding sadness, a number of believable characters, and it is admirably acted in all of its roles. Martin Ritt has staged it well and Boris Aronson has provided one of his usual fine sets. But there is a kind of dramatic aimlessness about it that keeps it from being more than moderately interesting.

The Dock Workers

Then comes the major item of the evening, the drama that gives its title to the collective proceedings, "A View From the Bridge." It is the melodramatic account of a well-intentioned stevedore in Red Hook, who allows two young Italians, smuggled into this country and given jobs on the docks, to live in his home until one of them falls in love with his niece. Then, driven by his hatred for the fellow and his repressed love for the niece, he turns him in to the immigration people. The ending is violent, tragic and rather fabricated.

Mr. Miller is properly unafraid of emotional scenes and melodramatic vigor, and I thought "A View From the Bridge" was tense and almost steadily interesting. But it also seemed to me, despite the playwright's gift for characterization, atmosphere and dialogue, curiously commonplace and lacking in any particular freshness of viewpoint or insight. It tells its story with dramatic directness, which is a virtue, but its efforts to make its melodramatic narrative significant or fill it with any sense of the brooding tragedy of life struck me as ineffectual.

Synthetic Air

Then, too, instead of seeming characteristically Arthur Miller, and therefore original and entirely fresh in its observation and comment, it had an oddly and disturbingly synthetic air about it. There is the character of a wise lawyer, who sits at the side of the stage and explains things, which gave it a touch of the Thornton Wilder of "Our Town," and the setting has the East River in the background, which was reminiscent of the Maxwell Anderson of "Winterset." Finally, to cap it all, there were moments when I suspected that the same story could have been told more powerfully by Tennessee Williams.

There can certainly be no complaint about the acting. All of the performances, particularly by Van Heflin as the stevedore, Jack Warden as a vengeful immigrant, Gloria Marlowe as the niece, Eileen Heckart as the stevedore's wife and J. Carrol Naish as the lawyer were admirable. I also thought Richard Davalos was properly in character as the boy who falls in love with the niece, and, in "A Memory of Two Mondays," Biff McGuire, Leo Penn, Tom Pedi, Russell Collins and Curt Conway were of great help. But "A View From the Bridge" is not what I had counted on from the author of "Death of a Salesman."

The New York Times
September 30, 1955

Theatre: 'A View From the Bridge'

Arthur Miller's Two Short Plays Staged

By BROOKS ATKINSON

ARTHUR MILLER'S "A View From the Bridge," which opened at the Coronet last evening, consists of two short plays set on the opposite shores of the East River.

Let's skip the first one—"A Memory of Two Mondays," a pedestrian chronicle of workaday life in a Manhattan warehouse. The second play, "A View From the Bridge," is the major item on the program—a grim, rasping drama on a theme that Greek dramatists applied to kings and queens. Mr. Miller has told it in terms of a Brooklyn longshoreman, his family and two Italians smuggled in aboard a cargo ship.

•

It is the story of a longshoreman, Eddie, a married man, who is in love with his niece. Since she is an orphan, Eddie has brought her up as a member of his own family. He might never have realized that he loved her unnaturally if she had not fallen in love with a boy of her age who has been smuggled in from Italy.

Although the environment is Red Hook and the characters are waterfront loafers, Mr. Miller tells the story in epic form. A paternal neighborhood lawyer serves as chorus. Sitting in one corner of the stage, he analyzes the story. In the final scene, after the catastrophe, he relates it to the ancient myths of Greece.

•

As a story, quite apart from its literary significance, "A View From the Bridge" has power and reality. For Mr. Miller, who knows the Brooklyn waterfront intimately, draws his characters with insight and color. As played by Van Heflin, Eddie is a vivid character who is inarticulate and dazed about what has happened to him, striking out wildly at random, blaming the wrong people, pulling down the whole household in a turmoil of self-destruction.

•

Inside the Red Hook house that Boris Aronson has ingeniously designed with some of the stateliness of Greek tragedy, Mr. Miller has tersely related a household story. The details are homely. The characters are familiar. The incidents are intimate and plausible. Under the direction of Martin Ritt, the acting is blunt and honest—Eileen Heckart as an anxious housekeeper; Gloria Marlowe as the niece starry-eyed with love for the Italian boy; Richard Davalos as the Italian boy, and Jack Warden as a sincere, warm-hearted, modestly hopeful immigrant. J. Carrol Naish, who plays a roistering, messy character in the first play, is particularly good as the meditative lawyer who serves the function of charm.

Yet this column will have to confess a certain measure of disappointment with "A View from the Bridge." As a work of art it aspires a little above its station. In both the writing and the acting, it is self-conscious, as though both author and actors were always trying for something more exalted than the narrative can yield.

•

"A View From the Bridge" contains the material for a forceful drama about simple people caught in a terrible crisis. But in Mr. Miller's blunt, spare characterizations they are not big enough for big tragedy. They are recognizable characters in an odd, pungent tale of the waterfront which, in the opinion of one theatregoer, Mr. Miller has put on too high a plane.

DAILY NEWS
September 30, 1955

Miller's 'View From the Bridge' Is Splendid, Stunning Theatre

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Under the general title of "A View from the Bridge," Arthur Miller has written two superlatively fine plays, and they were given a superlatively fine production at the Coronet Theatre last evening. They are the American theatre in its most vigorous aspect, and with them Miller, whose work has already commanded great respect, shows further development in his human insight, his theatrical skill and his quality as a poet. These plays are in the vernacular of the lowly—of the inarticulate, even—yet they emerge as works of beauty. And a most exciting company under the direction of Martin Ritt brings them to throbbing life.

Fine Character Role

The first of them might be called a mood-setter, rather than a curtain-raiser. Called "A Memory of Two Mondays," it is a one-act fragment about people who work in an automobile parts warehouse in the early Roosevelt days. Properly speaking, it has no plot—yet something does happen to almost everybody. A youth gets a chance to go to college. A drunk reforms. Another drunk rebels. A young man with a song in his soul finds himself forgetting the song as poverty and a lack of opportunity grind him down.

The principal performance in the opener is given by J. Carrol Naish in the role of a hard-drinking, short-tempered, ceaselessly profane old German, a warehouse shipping boss who has slaved there for 22 years. It is a slashing and wonderfully pictorial characterization.

Indeed, all the roles are character parts and they all are excellently done. The players include Leo Penn, Russell Collins, Van Heflin, Curt Conway and Tom Pedi. The warehouse setting by Boris Aronson is a masterpiece of dusty gloom.

Modern Classic

The second play, "A View from the Bridge," concerns present-day life in a colony of Italian-American longshoremen on the Brooklyn waterfront. Although it is vibrant with characters, this is no slice-of-life essay; it is a tragedy in the classic form, and I think it is a modern classic. What happens in it simply has to happen, and this is the inevitability of true tragedy. In it, Van Heflin gives a magnificent performance as a longshoreman who, though his mind is limited and he cannot find words for his thoughts, is an admirable man. He is popular, kind, loyal, loving and generous.

When two of his wife's Italian cousins—submarines they are, in waterfront argot—are smuggled into this country, he makes room for them in his home. Gratefully they move in among his wife, his children and the teen-age niece whom he has brought up and whom he has come to love, he thinks, as a daughter.

And now the stage is set for tragedy. One of the illegal immigrants has a family in Italy for whom he is working; the other, young, extraordinarily handsome and exceedingly blonde, is single. He wants to become an American, and he falls in love with his benefactor's niece. If he marries the girl he will no longer have to hide from immigration officials.

Many Fine Performances

A monstrous change creeps upon the kind and loving uncle. He is violently opposed to this romance and is not intelligent enough to realize that this opposition is not motivated, as he thinks, by a dislike of the boy and a suspicion that he is too pretty to be a man, but by his own too-intense love for his niece. Not even the wise and kindly neighborhood lawyer can persuade him to let the girl go.

The play is told as the lawyer's recollection of what happened—of the events that ultimately spell death for a man who would have scoffed at death only a brief time ago. The lawyer, played with quiet persuasiveness by Naish, sits at the side of the stage apron and now and again tells the audience of the things that came about.

This is an intensely absorbing drama, sure of itself every step of the way. It makes no false moves, wastes no time and has the beauty that comes from directness and simplicity. Some of the language in both the Miller works is rough or bawdy, but it is true and it belongs and is not there for shoddy sensationalism.

There are several other fine performances in the second play, particularly those of Gloria Marlowe as the girl, Eileen Heckart as Heflin's wife, Richard Davalos as the boy and Jack Warden as the boy's brother. And for the tragedy Aronson has designed a miraculously fluid and poetically imaginative section of the Red Hook waterfront.

Arthur Miller has come a long way in our theatre, and he will go much farther, for his mind is a mind that won't stay still.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

September 30, 1955

2-in-1 Bill Staged at Coronet

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

"A View From the Bridge" is an unusual evening of theater, made of material which is not very original.

Arthur Miller's new work at the Coronet is a pair of plays. "A Memory of Two Mondays" is a plotless group of character studies. It is set in a period and done in a realistic manner that have both been well used by our dramatists. It impels some first-rate performances, which seem gratuitous because they have so little to prove.

The second play has more bald plot than anything seen north of the Opera House in many years.

Clearly Mr. Miller set out to dramatically criticize the current attitude toward immigration. Carried away by his own sinister saga of Sicilian vengeance, he has let bombastic emotion quench his purpose.

Violent Finale.

Not that "View" is ineffective on the stage. Once it gets going, it can keep the audience breathless with suspense, and gasping at the violence of its finale.

The central figure is a longshoreman. His niece falls in love with a young immigrant he has smuggled into the country. The older man is consumed by his own fascination with the girl, and bloodily wrecks his own life and several others.

It is a tale absorbed in a single emotion, and it has the weakness of failing to inspire sympathy for its principal character.

Double Role.

Van Heflin gets top billing, as an ambitious auto parts salesman in the first play, and the romantic uncle in the second. The first is hardly a leading role, and he performs it most adequately.

As the vengeful longshoreman in "A View From the Bridge," he has to create interest in a tragic figure which has no real stature.

J. Carrol Naish makes a suitably doleful narrator for the second play. This follows a magnificent piece of character acting in the first. His portrait of an aged, stolid, courageous accountant is carved out of granite.

Biff McGuire has shining honesty as a doomed young Irishman. Eileen Heckart is fine as the troubled longshoreman's wife.

Nobody better understands the shameless grandeur necessary for the second melodrama than Jack Warden as a man with a primitive sense of morality. The young lovers are given a fair and glowing share of emotion by Gloria Marlowe and Richard Davalos.

Journal-American

September 30, 1955

Hail Heflin In Two Plays

Arthur Miller Dramas Show Fine Acting, But the People Are Dreary

By JOHN McCLAIN

THE WORLD OF ARTHUR MILLER is a place of strenuous emotions, frustrations and general despair. In his two new one-act plays which were presented last night at the Coronet Theatre we were taken to the environs of the Brooklyn Bridge and shown, first, the seamy life inside a Manhattan warehouse and then the violence erupting around a longshoreman's apartment on the Brooklyn side. Leaving the theatre, one had the conviction that Steve Brody had the right idea: he didn't go either way, he just jumped into the river.

Mr. Miller's first vignette entitled "A Memory of Two Mondays" involves a dozen employes of an automobile parts shipping room, and they are by far the most flamboyant parts employes I have ever heard of.

There is Gus, a roaring Scandinavian who chases girls in and out of the wash room, but has a heart of gold concealed beneath his shabby undershirt and galluses; there is the almost poetic young Irish emigree; a lad who is reading "War and Peace" and hopes to go to college; a couple of smooth operators, a tootsie who drives everybody ma-a-d; the old drone who is everybody's pal, and the drunkest man we've had on the stage in several seasons.

I'd like to be able to tell you what the special significance of all this adds up to. The characters mill and thresh about, look out the window at a bawdy house across the street, form a solid front in protecting the drunk from the boss, and otherwise give us glimpses into their private hopes and heartaches. I suppose it shows us life close to the core, men and women doing the best they can under a system that demands that certain people have to work in an automobile parts warehouse. This I will accept; but I will not recommend it as a very absorbing or conclusive play.

In his second chukker, "A View From the Bridge," Mr. Miller at least comes up with the semblance of a plot and is, hence, on less yielding ground. A longshoreman is bringing up his orphaned niece, and she has developed to the point in years, and otherwise, that he has fallen in love with her. But at this juncture a couple of his wife's male relatives from Sicily are smuggled off a ship and stashed out in his home. The girl naturally falls in love with one of them, and what happens from then on shouldn't happen to a whole boat-load of illegal entries.

The author has an unqualified ear, as evidenced in both plays, and he has a legitimate understanding of the people he writes about. But I don't think he makes a very valid case with "Monday," and I thought the story he tells in "View" is fairly pedestrian. All right, he's got special tricks like having Van Heflin kiss Richard Davalos (two men, yet), and there are some moments of sheer good acting, like the time Heflin is first faced with his infatuation for his niece. But I still do not think the aggregate represents either a fair estimate of the author's talents or a particularly fruitful excursion in the theatre.

I will go even further to state that while I thought the cast was reasonably deployed in the first bit, I never really believed Van Haflin was a tough deck worker in the second.

Take a look at the last newspaper photo of a meeting of the local I.L.A. and show me his reasonable facsimilie.

Otherwise the acting is really exceptional, including Mr. Heflin, who is not at fault for looking less than murderous. J. Carrol Naish has a wonderful time as the boisterous Gus, and is a brilliantly assured waterfront lawyer in the latter one-acter; Gloria Marlowe is an enticing bimbo first and an intoxicating adolescent later; Jack Warden gives one of his finest interpretations as the older brother of the Sicilian emigrees. Other expert contributions are offered by Curt Conway, Russell Collins, Eileen Heckart, Richard Davalos, Leo Penn, Biff McGuire, David Clark, Tom Pedi and Ralph Bell.

Maybe it's my fault, but I'm getting bored by these terribly significant plays about dreary people.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune
September 30, 1955

THEATER

'A View From the Bridge'

By WALTER F. KERR

AT THE beginning of the second—and longer—of the two new Arthur Miller plays that compose "A View from the Bridge" at the Coronet, a dapper but worried little Italian lawyer named Alfieri turns up in a spotlight. Mr. Alfieri is there to set the scene for a savage domestic development along the Brooklyn waterfront, and to throw in a choral word or two as the curious tensions mount.

One of the things this straightforward mouthpiece has to say is that he is terribly interested in getting at the facts. "In facts," he muses, "I find the poetry, the wonder, and the amazement of spring."

• • •

The facts of the play are terrifying. A run-of-the-mill longshoreman, a fellow who loves his wife and is kind to kids and especially kind to an orphan girl he has reared, is faced with the problem of finding shelter for a couple of his wife's relatives who have entered the country illegally.

One of the refugees is a handsome blonde youngster who falls in love, almost at once, with the pretty orphan kind-hearted Eddie has watched over so carefully. And out of the innocent and unsuspecting affection between two likable children there rises hell's own brew to envelop Eddie. Eddie does not understand what is happening to him, but he cannot bear to have the girl touched. He is ready to do anything—spread the word that the boy is homosexual, tip off the immigration authorities to a crime he has himself created, take a switchblade knife to the whole neighborhood—before he can surrender a child he has only been gentle with.

• • •

Van Heflin plays the generous man who is torn on the rack of his own unrecognized passion, and he has worked out a series of tense and affecting mannerisms to help him build to an anguished crescendo. With a restless cracking of his knuckles, a breathless stammer, and an evasive irritation that drives him away from other people's faces even when he is trying to command them, the actor betrays the secret sense of shame that drives unlucky Eddie to his final violence.

• • •

Around him, Eileen Heckart as an alarmed but loving wife, Jack Warden as a refugee with a strong arm and a stronger sense of honor, Richard Davalos as the "paper doll" lad who is determined to have a bride, and Gloria Marlowe as the frantic cause of the uncontrollable tangle, supply crackling performances as further fuel for a dramatic bonfire.

• • •

The lines of the play are taut, the dialogue speaks its mind directly, the theatrical images that spread open to give vividness and color to every crisis are shrewdly conceived. Above it all looms a Boris Aronson waterfront that has in it, almost magically, echoes of Italy and Rome and even the Greece that gave us tragedy.

If I have a reservation about "A View from the Bridge," it is that that overwhelming human majesty, that echo of warmth and pity, that is suggested in the setting is not entirely present in the play. We watch with fascination; but we do not honestly like Eddie as much as we ought to.

It may be that Mr. Miller has clung too fiercely to the facts. His picture of life may need some of that poetry that the remote classical parallels hint at, some of that very poetry that Miller is always honestly reaching for and—in this case—barely missing. I suspect, too, that it might have helped to elaborate this almost-full-length play into its full dimensions—we need to know and feel for the original Eddie before we can descend with him, in full sympathy, into his inferno.

• • •

The little play that takes up the earlier part of the evening, "A Memory of Two Mondays," is an interesting and sometimes affecting mood piece in its own right, though it might easily have been sacrificed in the interests of the larger work. A reminiscence of depression times, with an eager and bookish youngster coming to know and admire his fellow-workers in a factory before taking his leave of them, it is extremely well acted by Biff McGuire, as a lyrical Irish youngster whose soul slowly freezes, Leo Penn, as the apprentice who is going to educate himself, and Russell Collins, as a patient nursemaid to a rambunctious foreman. The foreman is given a showy but overly mechanical performance by J. Carrol Naish, and Mr. Heflin, Miss Heckart and Tom Pedi lend color around the edges.

That last note of exultation that might have made "A View from the Bridge" a major work from a major playwright is missing—and missing in a context that begs for it. But the evening remains a must for anyone who is at all interested in what the contemporary American theater is thinking about.

"Iolanthe"

The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company of London has scheduled a limited engagement of seven presentations at the Sam S. Shubert Theatre. Reviews of their first presentation, IOLANTHE, are herewith reproduced.

The New York Times
September 28, 1955

Theatre: Happy Bow by D'Oyly Carte

Savoyards Begin New Run With 'Iolanthe'

By BROOKS ATKINSON

CELEBRATING the seventy-fifth anniversary of its first visit to America, the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company is behaving very sensibly. It is giving us the finest Gilbert and Sullivan we have had for years.

After respectfully playing both the American and British national anthems, Isidore Godfrey plunged straight into the overture of "Iolanthe" at the Sam S. Shubert Theatre last evening. For the last ten years it has been customary to give Mr. Godfrey a gentleman's handicap of three or four performances to get the new orchestra under control.

•

No allowances are necessary this year. The orchestra is in perfect order, giving us the lightness, gaiety and sweetness of the overture without hesitation or blemish. The new spirit—or perhaps it is the seventy-five-year spirit — extends through the whole performance. The fairies are lovely in their Victorian formality, to say nothing of their spotless dress. And the peers look grand in their festal

Peter Pratt Portrays Lord Chancellor

"IOLANTHE"

Revival of the operetta written by W. S. Gilbert, composed by Arthur Sullivan; staged by Robert Gibson; music directed by Isidore Godfrey; presented by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company at the Sam S. Shubert Theatre, September 27, 1955. The cast:

Lord Chancellor.... Peter Pratt
Earl of Mountararat.....
Donald Adams
Earl Tolloller... Leonard Osborn
Private Willis.... Fisher Morgan
Strephon..... Alan Styler
Queen of the Fairies.....
Ann Drummond-Grant
Iolanthe.....Joyce Wright
Celia.....Maureen Melvin
Leila.....Berly Dixon
Fleta.....Margaret Dobson
Phyllis.....Cynthia Morey

robes, and condescend very nobly to each other and the audience.

This is the first Martyn Green-less engagement of the company for a good many years. One of the most illustrious of the Gilbert and Sullivan immortals has taken up residence in the ordinary theatre. It is pleasant to report that he has been replaced by a first-rate singer and performer who is never dazzled with his own cleverness.

He is Peter Pratt, the youngest member of the troupe and, according to the program, only 32 years of age. He plays the highly susceptible Lord Chancellor like a thoroughbred—missing none of the humor, yet respecting the discipline of the performance as a whole. Obviously, the D'Oyly Carte Company has survived a considerable crisis, losing something that was unique but replacing it with something that is delightful and enduring.

Since the war there have been occasions when the perfection of the performances seemed more dogmatic than enjoyable. The disciplines smacked of the schoolmaster; the traditional formalities came out of the rule-book. But this "Iolanthe" has the sparkle and freshness of something that is enjoyed by a company that has mastered the rules and never has to think about them.

Alan Styler is a handsome Strephon, with the saving grace of a sense of humor. And Cynthia Morey's Phyllis is at once lovely and ironic. The two earls could hardly be more amusingly pompous than Donald Adams and Leonard Osborn make them. As Private Willis, who ponders over the mysteries of British politics, Fisher Morgan has an excellent voice, though he does drown the lyrics in resonant masculinity. Joyce Wright's Iolanthe is beguiling. Although Gilbert hated contraltos, Ann Drummond-Grant plays and sings the Queen of the Fairies triumphantly.

Nothing has succumbed to routine. Everything the company does is as it used to be. But a new spirit of delight blows through it, lightening the humor, sweetening the sentiment. The singing tones are clean; the dance movements are dainty; the Victorian decorum is witty.

On the seventy-fifth anniversary of its first visit to America, the D'Oyly Carte Company is in high fettle. And the Savoyards are, too.

DAILY NEWS

September 28, 1955

D'Oyly Carte Back, 'Iolanthe' Uninspired

By JOHN CHAPMAN

The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company came back to New York last evening after a number of years away, and I wish I could greet them more joyfully than I shall. They are a most pleasant company, nicely schooled in standard Gilbert & Sullivan, and Isidore Godfrey is in the pit conducting, with his hair as pink as ever it was. But they should not have begun their engagement with "Iolanthe," which is the most difficult of all the works of the masters to carry off. It would have been better to open with a "Mikado" or "Pirates."

The D'Oyly Carters, whose watchwords are memory and tradition, should have remembered that we in New York saw an incomparable "Iolanthe" in 1926, when Winthrop Ames produced it at the Plymouth Theatre, which is just up the alley from the scene of last night's opening, the Shubert. They should have borne in mind this great Ames production—with Ernest Lawford, John Barclay, William Williams and Adele Sanderson in the cast—and decided to avoid "Iolanthe" as an opener . . . unless they thought they could equal it.

Same Old Sets

They didn't equal it at the Shubert last evening, for they came in with the flat scenery, flat lighting and flat faces of a hard-working, fast-running touring company. They didn't even equal their own production here of "Iolanthe" in 1947, when Martyn Green, Darrell Fancourt, Ella Hallman and Margaret Mitchell were principals. Except for the precision of their choral work they were no better than our own G & S companies organized years ago by Milton Aborn.

Precision they do have, and clarity of speech in song. There are some pleasant voices, too, with Joyce Wright as Iolanthe, Cynthia Morey as Phyllis and Alan Styler as Strephon. Most of those in the company last evening were strangers to me, for time passes, Savoyards die or quit and only critics endure.

Most important of the new crop of singing comedians is Peter Pratt, who has accepted the assignments that once were given to Martyn Green. In "Iolanthe," Pratt, as the Lord Chancellor, is a funny fellow who looks and performs like a combination of George Arliss and Bert Lahr. With his charm and ability he would be an asset to any company, including the cast of "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof."

The D'Oyly Carters will be at the Shubert for nine weeks, with a change of bill every week.

Daily Mirror

September 28, 1955

Robert Coleman's THEATRE:

'Iolanthe' at Shubert A Delightful Offering

• Current tour marks 75th anniversary of D'Oyly Carte Opera's first U. S. trek.

The local Savoyards were out in full force Tuesday evening to welcome the D'Oyly Carte Opera Co. to the Shubert Theatre. The current tour of the distinguished troupe, which started in New York, marks the 75th anniversary of the always welcome visitors' first American trek.

To our delight, "Iolanthe" was the initial offering, for it and "Yeomen of the Guard" happen to be our favorites of all the Gilbert and Sullivan works. It has wit and one of the most charming scores of the lot. Solos and ensembles, sprightly and satiric, flow in a felicitous stream.

HERE, AS you know, the masters, who loathed working together and lost their original genius apart, are having fun with the British Parliamentary system, and its peers, who fall victim to the blandishments and cleverness of the peris. The peris being fairies of woodland sprites, who fear marriage because it spells mortality for them.

We were in for quite a surprise Tuesday evening, for the company was almost a new one. And, we are happy to report, an excellent one. We are certain that the recent additions to the roster will win as warm a place in our affections as did their predecessors.

Peter Pratt, once an understudy to Martyn Green, has stepped into that patter wizard's shoes as though they were created for him. He has a nimble way with words, and knows how to achieve laughs without exceeding the bounds of tradition. Ann Drummond-Grant is a commanding, wryly humorous and full-voiced Queen of the Fairies.

JOYCE WRIGHT is captivating in the title role, while Alan Styler and Cynthia Morey are most attractive as her son and the shepherdess he would wed. Donald Adams and Leonard Osborn are first-rate as his noble competitors for the fair Arcadian's hand. Adams, by the way, has one of the richest voices we've heard in a G&S company in many a semester.

Fisher Morgan is an amusing Private Willis, and Maureen Melvin, Berly Dixon and Margaret Dobson are ingratiating fairies. And let's not forget Isidore Godfrey. This dynamic conductor has become an institution over here. The first-nighters gave him a rousing reception when he stepped to the podium and lifted his baton.

We had a wonderful evening at the Shubert, and believe you will, too. Be you a dyed-in-the-wool Savoyard or just someone seeking intelligent entertainment. For the Gilbert and Sullivan operas are all gems. And "Iolanthe" is one of the most sparkling of them. "The Mikado" will be given later in the week. It is, perhaps, the most popular of the G&S series.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

September 28, 1955

Savoyards Get Kicks From 'Iolanthe' Again

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Nothing in the theater is quite so timeless as the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company with its apparently immortal Gilbert and Sullivan operas.

Last night at the Shubert, the troupe came back to open its season with "Iolanthe." Musically it is one of the prettiest of the works, and it also has a thorough going plot.

It was one of those nights when everybody settled down for a good time as soon as the lights were dimmed. There is nothing like a devoted Savoyard to know what he is going to get and like it.

All the orchestra's leader, Isidore Godfrey, had to do was appear in the pit to get a hand as big as many of the Philharmonic's leaders.

New Stars.

The company certainly fulfilled the expectations of the fans. Several of the principals are new since the D'Oyly Carte last played New York. And there seems a more carefree attitude about the opera than has marked its past performance.

The most striking change in casting is the promotion of Peter Pratt into the roles so long associated with Martyn Green.

It becomes immediately clear that Mr. Pratt is going to have his own, quite fresh approach to these famous comedy parts. A young man, he simulates an ancient posture and voice with high effect. Only occasionally does he let a rich bass tone ring out.

Mr. Pratt has a way of deadpanning certain passages, then suddenly emphasizing his point with swift comedy gestures or looks.

His dancing is most startling. It seems to burst out of him in a fit of maniacal energy, all wild kicks and stomps which, after a few bars of music, leave him looking exhausted.

Right for Role.

It was a lively, fresh performance that bodes well for his later roles in this repertory season.

For the contralto roles, and this week singing the Queen of the Fairies, there is Ann Drummond-Grant, who has exactly the right appearance for these parts. She looks pink and pretty, with an opulent figure and, for this role, a mass of red curls.

Joyce Wright is decorative and most musical in the title role of a Fairy banished for marrying a mortal. Alan Styler is her handsome son who is human only from the waist up. And Cynthia Morey is the decorative Phyllis who upsets the hearts of the entire Peerage.

Some of the evening's best singing is offered by Donald Adams and Leonard Osborn, as two ringleaders of the Aristocrats. And Fisher Morgan makes a most resonant Private Willis of the Guards.

The charm of G. and S. is hard to define. Whether it captivates you beyond salvage, as it does many people, there is no escaping the novel joy of an evening spiced with innocent wit. It is a manner, mood and attitude our day does not know how to create.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

September 28, 1955

THEATER

'Iolanthe'

By WALTER F. KERR

IT MUST be distracting to play Gilbert and Sullivan. The singers are required, by the attractive conventions of this sort of spoof, to face directly front for a good part of the evening. And what they are looking at is a whole houseful of customers playing the show right back at them.

At the Shubert Tuesday evening, where the visiting D'Oyly Carte troupe opened a nine-week stand, I'd say that some four to five hundred happy playgoers were mouthing the lyrics with remarkable precision, virtually dictating—with a kind of mass nod of their heads—the proper emphases for the good folk on stage. Another four to five hundred were busy conducting the orchestra with such finesse and understanding that Isidore Godfrey might have dropped his baton, stepped into the alley for a cigarette, and been replaced in the pit at a moment's notice. The remaining onlookers were, I believe, taking pictures. The performance out front was very good.

* * *

The performance on stage was, as it happens, even better. A good many of the old D'Oyly Carte standbys—Martyn Green and Darrel Fancourt among them—have disappeared from the sylvan grotto that houses "Iolanthe," but the management has been very shrewd in recruiting new members of Parliament, conscience - stricken fairies, and helmeted Grenadier Guards to take over.

The chorus, for instance, now contains quite a few good-looking girls, as against certain earlier contingents composed almost entirely of singers getting ready to play Katisha. The good-looking girls are, furthermore, in splendid voice, prepared to reject and hold on to their high-born swains ("You wicked peers—don't go") with musical richness and bland comic relish. The males of the outfit are young and able, too: the first parade of distinguished bumble-heads, swathed in livid greens, reds, and blues beneath their flourishing sideburns, must be exactly as delectable as W. S. Gilbert first imagined it.

* * *

The principals are wonderfully sober as they take up the vexing problem of intermarriage between mortals, fairies, half-fairies, and aristocrats. Ann Drummond-Grant is a regal, red-headed tyrant as the Fairy Queen, Joyce Wright a properly porcelain Iolanthe, Alan Styler a splendidly matter - of - fact Strephen (since he is only 50 per cent mortal, he has little to be matter-of-fact about), Fisher Morgan a full-throated, double-chinned Private Willis, and Cynthia Morey a disarming shepherdess as she sympathizes with the men who can't have her.

The fellow the enthusiasts will be wanting to know about, though, is Peter Pratt. Mr. Pratt has slipped into Martyn Green's washboard wig and gold-embroidered robes, and he has a vast array of light-footed memories to beat down before he can make himself felt.

He does it handsomely, and he does it in an unexpected way. Instead of clinging to the jack-in-the-box jubilation and antic footwork of his predecessor—he kicks up his heels only as occasional punctuation — he seems bent on working out a kind of frowsy, beetle-eyed characterization. This Lord Chancellor is a dry, quiet, sharp-witted old dog, with a speculative glare, a gently rolling gait, and the look of a prize-winning lemon. It may be that Mr. Green could show him a few useful tricks when it comes to the violent run-on nonsense of "When You're Lying Awake," but in every other respect Mr. Pratt's drollery is as winning as his attack is fresh.

* * *

The production as a whole is joyously deadpan, unfalteringly tongue-in-cheek. Because the company is uniformly trained to treat Mr. Gilbert's wildest inventions with a Sophoclean seriousness, because it goes at every preposterous gesture with enormous propriety, it is never forced to labor a joke. The joke simply spreads with gentle guile over the entire stage, then bubbles along on its own momentum beneath everything else that is done. You'll have a fine time.

New York Post

September 28, 1955

By Richard Watts Jr.

The Best of Gilbert and Sullivan

Of all the delightful and seemingly immortal musical collaborations of Gilbert and Sullivan, the most enchanting, I am convinced, is "Iolanthe." Despite the glories of their other works, the words and music of the genius among lyric writers and librettists and the greatest of light composers never met in such exquisite alliance, and there never has been a more delicious combination of fantasy, satire, lightness of fancy, grace of imagination and lovely melody. Within its gay and whimsically charming limits, I think it comes very close to being a perfect work of art.

It was, therefore, a splendid idea for the D'Oyly Carte Company, on its first visit to America in several years and introducing a troupe that is almost entirely new to us, to open its local season at the Shubert Theater last night with this airy masterpiece. And I am happy to be able to report that the performance, from the time that its veteran orchestra leader, the treasured Isidor Godfrey, picked up his baton, proved entirely worthy of the occasion. The new crop of Savoyards is not letting down one of the great traditions of the modern theater.

A D'Oyly Carte troupe, to satisfy the jealous demands of the band of passionate Savoy addicts in New York, must to a large extent stand or fall on the quality of its leading comedian, and Peter Pratt, the young performer who succeeded to the mantle of the memorable Martyn Green, faced a challenging test last night. As the highly susceptible Lord Chancellor, he understandably started a bit tentatively, but he is a talented and likable comic, neither too wistful nor too extravagant, and he has the immense virtue of singing lyrics so they can be savored.

As both a reviewer and a Savoy enthusiast, I would naturally have to be at least a trifle captious, and my only mild complaint to Mr. Pratt is that I thought he did the long and famous patter song of the Lord Chancellor just a little too rapidly. But that is assuredly a minor objection, and he made up for it by managing his part of the "Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady" number with such agreeable gusto that, despite my instinctive hostility to encores, I didn't mind when he repeated it twice.

The Singers

One of the major virtues of the current company is the imperative one that it sings so well. To cite an instance, I don't think I have ever heard "When Britain Really Ruled the Waves" sung more brilliantly than it is by Donald Adams, who seems destined to be one of the mainstays of the new troupe. Another valuable member is clearly Ann Drummond-Grant, who portrays the heavy ladies of the operas. One of the loveliest numbers Sullivan ever composed is "Oh, Foolish Fay," and, in her role of the Queen of the Fairies, she handled it beautifully.

We addicts are to a high degree traditionalists, and we look with a jaundiced eye on any radical changes in production. But I doubt if even the most conservative among us will mind the fact that the old sets and costumes, which always looked as if they were the ones used when the operas had their Victorian premieres, have at long last given way to newer and brighter versions. There is an air of freshness in the current presentation that doesn't harm the traditional values. There is nothing lovelier than "Iolanthe," and it is a pleasure to see it here again.

Journal American

September 28, 1955

D'Oyly Carte Perfection

Superb Cast Opens 75th Season Of Gilbert and Sullivan Opera

By JOHN McCLAIN

THIS IS THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY of the D'Oyly Carte Company's introduction of Gilbert and Sullivan to these shores, and last evening they opened their current season with "Iolanthe" at the Shubert Theatre.

It seemed to me a happy choice, for I have always felt that this opera, while not as frequently presented here as some of the others, still has the most skillful blend of Sullivan's more serious melodies and cantatas, and the utterly delightful libretto by Gilbert, kidding the knee breeches off the Peers of the Realm.

The present company, containing many old faces and a few welcome additions, holds high the escutcheon of the D'Oyly Carte tradition.

Never a Hitch

The choruses of both men and women enunciate perfectly and sing on key, a rare experience in these days; the principals have uniformly strong, professional voices. Everybody, from the prop boy to the wardrobe mistress has grown up in the movement and timing of the production, and there is never a hitch.

Peter Pratt, taking over from the familiar Martyn Green as head man in the company, plays the role of Lord Chancellor with all of his predecessor's infectious gift for sardonic comedy. All the old "bits" are there: the venerable judiciary suddenly gathering up his robes of office and kicking up his heels as he sings, "Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady." It would seem this old man of thirty-two may be playing the lead roles in the company for the next fifty years, or until he grows up to the age of the characters.

Cynthia Morey is a bright and beguiling new Phyllis, making her first appearance in the role over here and scoring solidly. She is amply supported by a couple of veterans in Donald Adams, as the Earl of Mountararat, and Leonard Osborn as the Earl Tolloller, both of them possessed of long-accepted talents as vocalists and ingratiating Savoyards.

Very Winsome

Joyce Wright (Mrs. Peter Pratt) another old hand, is suitably winsome and fetching as Iolanthe; Alan Styler, dashing, handsome and a good singer, supplies a worthy Strephon; Ann Drummond-Grant, the Queen of the Fairies, is suitably buxom and bewitching (can a fairy be bewitching?) Fisher Morgan makes the most of the great sentinel's song, which establishes him as a popular newcomer to the cast.

And, of course, never forget Isidore Godfrey, the conductor of the orchestra, whose performance during the overture will bring mist to the eyes of all who have enjoyed the D'Oyly Carte companies through the years.

Viewing "Iolanthe" and the D'Oyly Cartes once again I am faced with the old question of why nobody, here or abroad in seventy-five years, has been able to approach this level of light opera either in conception or execution. It is still the tops.

"A Day by the Sea"

DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER

September 27, 1955

'A Day by the Sea' a Placid Play In Which Nothing Much Happens

By JOHN CHAPMAN

A new English play by N. C. Hunter called "A Day by the Sea" strikes me—rather feebly—as a particularly dispiriting version of "The Cherry Orchard." It prattled and maundered around in the crisp new ANTA Theatre last evening, and had the jolly atmosphere of a busy day at Frank E. Campbell's.

In this rueful little comedy Mr. Hunter and his producers, Huntington Hartford and Stephen Mitchell, present some admirable actors in a fog of frustration. Among them are:

Aline MacMahon, who has a great big house on the British coast and has nothing to do but take care of an old man and a few visitors. She herself admits she talks too much.

Halliwell Hobbes, the old man. He dozes most of the time, but wakes up to take his medicine and make a querulous observation every so often.

A Funny Doctor

Hume Cronyn, Miss MacMahon's son, who is a failure as a career man in the Foreign Office. He knows why he is a failure, too. He says, "Nobody likes me."

Dennis King, a gin-drinking doctor. Last evening King thrust a spark of life and humor into the play every time he had a chance, which was not often, and I had the impression that he thought the piece was as futile as I did. I fancied he was kidding his own role and his own play, and admired him.

Jessica Tandy, once widowed and once divorced, with a couple of kids who run around the stage flying a kite. When she was 19 she was in love with Cronyn, but he was too busy with his career to notice her. Now, at this late date, he wants her to marry him and says, and I quote, "But surely you knew I was fond of you." But she says it is too late and won't have him, which seems a pity because Tandy and Cronyn are married anyhow in what we call real life.

Yearning Nursemaid

Megs Jenkins, a nursemaid for the kite-flying kids, who has a yearning for old Doc King and promises that she will let him drink all the gin he wants if he marries her. He declines, with gallantry.

"A DAY BY THE SEA"

Play by N. C. Hunter; staged by Cedric Hardwicke; production designed by Jay Krause; presented by Huntington Hartford and Stephen Mitchell at the ANTA Theatre, September 26, 1955. The cast:

Laura Anson...Aline MacMahon
David Anson...Halliwell Hobbes
Julian Anson.....Hume Cronyn
Dr. Farley.....Dennis King
Frances Farrar..Jessica Tandy
Elinor Eddison...Veronica Cole
Toby Eddison...Barclay Hodges
Humphrey Caldwell...Leo Britt
Miss Mathieson...Megs Jenkins
William Gregson..John W. Austin

The two settings by Jay Krause—the garden of the big house and a rocky picnic spot on the seashore—are imposing. But the shore scene had the screwiest-looking ocean. I think it was made of Reynolds Wrap all crinkled up.

The direction is by Cedric Hardwicke. It isn't crinkled up—just placid. They tell me that John Gielgud, Ralph Richardson and others made quite a thing out of "A Day by the Sea" in London. I'll never know why. Or how.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

September 27, 1955

THEATER

'A Day by the Sea'

By WALTER F. KERR

"A Day by the Sea" is probably too small a play to be acted. It must be quietly and almost thoughtlessly inhabited if it is to work at all.

In London, where it had a considerable success, it also had John Gielgud, Ralph Richardson, Irene Worth, and Sybil Thorndyke to stroll out into the ivied garden without even noticing that it was ivied—they'd all been there so many times before. A deck chair didn't have to be looked at before it was sat in; it had, after all, waited for these people from time immemorial. A teacup didn't have to be handled; it fitted the finger with an absent-minded familiarity of its own. The five or six people who had wasted their lives had wasted them right here, with no awareness at all that anything irrevocable was happening. The overhead tree, the idling swing, the spare and desultory talk, and the faltering people were glued to the same touching, autumnal canvas.

Here, the play is acted. It is, a matter of fact, very well acted. Dennis King has a fine, faintly boozy air about him as an out-of-practice doctor who is capable of rant at one moment and embarrassed apology the next. Jessica Tandy is not only lovely to look at as she sits in detached wisdom beneath an umbrella on the beach, she is able to put on just that mellow, level-headed, mildly despairing candor that her twice-married, twice-unhappy woman calls for.

Hume Cronyn plucks at his trouser crease, leaves a leg uncrossed—in mid-air—as a sudden thought strikes him, and worries over his failure to rise in the British civil service with a dry and tight-lipped dedication that explains everything about him. And Aline MacMahon alternately mothers and chides this rootless brood with tart humor and heart-warming concern.

• • •

But one and all are, in effect, appearing under assumed names. Mr. Cronyn is meticulously careful to reconstruct the overly neat appearance, the nervously flexing fingertips, the forced and cheerless 'embassy' smiles that define his unsuccessful man. Miss Tandy's poise is impeccable, the rueful but resigned look in her eyes terribly accurate. Miss MacMahon even manages to put on a brisk Dorsetshire accent. But they are eternally outlining, describing consciously fashioning characters from an author's notebook. What they are doing may amount to an extraordinarily intelligent life-study, but it never relaxes into indisputable life—it never really sinks with a familiar sigh into one of those deck-chairs.

• • •

Played from this slight distance, N. C. Hunter's tenuous examination of an emotionally enfeebled household quickly reveals its defects as drama. Sudden, gratuitous confidences turn up from nowhere; with no invitation at all, a woman is apt to plunge into reminiscences covering the past twenty years. As though to even the score, the stage personnel will be quickly shuffled so that a new, equally unasked-for confidence may begin.

And Mr. Hunter does not really care what imposing tasks he sets for his actors. Miss Tandy's long second-act confession, for instance, must be played to an old man asleep on the sands and to a woman who cannot possibly be dramatically affected by any revelations that may pop out. Miss Tandy handles the sequence with complete honesty; but there is so little tension between her and her onstage listeners that none is left over to see into the auditorium. "A Day by the Sea," in spite of Cedric Hardwicke's thoughtful direction, hasn't a sufficiently bold theatrical line to survive merely conscientious treatment. Lacking greatness of its own, it needs greatness on the payroll.

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Exception must be made for Megs Jenkins, repeating her London role of a love-starved nursemaid and repeating it as though she'd lived for years in a tidy room at the back of the house; and for Halliwell Hobbes, rousing from his slumbers just long enough to complain about the food, the chairs, and the noises his family make. When Mr. Hobbes muttered that he'd been walked up and down to the neighborhood pond a thousand times in his life, I believed in him, in the pond, and in the play.

New York Post

September 27, 1955

By Richard Watts Jr.

English Play in a Chekhov Mood

In "A Day By the Sea," N. C. Hunter has written frankly in the Chekhov manner. The British dramatist's play, which opened last night at the ANTA Theater, is not a direct paraphrase of a particular work, as Joshua Logan's "The Wisteria Trees" was of "The Cherry Orchard," but it employs the great Russian's method of indirection, obliqueness and concentration on mood to tell a rueful Chekhovian tale of a group of frustrated and highly introspective English men and women brooding over their lost lives and finding a certain sad relish in talking of their defeats.

There is virtually no physical action in it; an ineffectual British foreign-service officer climbing a cliff to retrieve a boy's kite being its most strenuous deed in that respect. It is intentionally deliberate and slow-paced, concerning itself entirely with character and the mood of brooding introspection, and I think it is more successful in achieving the Master's manner than his spirit. It is a thoughtful, sensitive and interesting play, but, at least in its American presentation, I fear it is too lacking in dramatic vitality to make it a satisfying evening in the theater.

"A Day By the Sea" is the sort of drama that must lean heavily on fairly subtle brilliance of playing in some half dozen of its most important characterizations, and it is so well acted in all of them that it seems ungrateful to say that the local performances don't quite add up to the electric vividness necessary to give it the dramatic life required for success. Having seen the play in London two seasons ago and admired it considerably more there, I am perhaps trying to justify a change in me in saying so, but I think I am right in this belief.

In at least three of its roles, it strikes me as being everything it should have been. Halliwell Hobbes, that splendid veteran, gives a superb performance as a man of 80, looking on the world about him with fine disapproval. Aline MacMahon is excellent as his devoted but sometimes irritated wife, and Megs Jenkins, who is playing the part she had in the original production, is real and moving as a plain-faced nurse hopelessly and loyally in love with a drunken doctor who ignores her.

All of these roles are important to the play, but it is the parts portrayed by Jessica Tandy, Hume Cronyn and Dennis King that are even more vital to it. Miss Tandy is the youthful widow who had once been in love with the foreign-service officer, Mr. Cronyn is the stiff and ineffectual diplomat, and Mr. King is the drunker doctor, and all of them reveal their accustomed and notable competence, particularly Miss Tandy in the characterization beautifully created by Irene Worth in the London version. In that earlier production, John Gielgud was the diplomat and Ralph Richardson was the alcoholic and philosophical physician.

It was in the Richardson-created part that I found myself least comfortable last night. Certainly, Mr. King gives an effective and interesting performance, but he tends, I think, to make the doctor too much of a buffoon, too much a figure intended chiefly for audience laughter. Richardson gave the poor fellow humor, but he also made him deeply touching, indicating that he had been a man of some quality and stature before his weakness destroyed him, and I thought the play was thereby aided enormously. It is still a striking work, but too much of its forcefulness has gone out of it.

Journal American

September 27, 1955

Battle With Words By Gifted Players

Unrelieved Dialogue Detracts From Action in British Import

By JOHN McCLAIN

Get out your benzedrine, boys and girls, here comes Chekhov! For "A Day by the Sea," the new British import by N. C. Hunter which opened at the ANTA Theatre last night, is precisely that.

There are the listless and postured groups sitting in a garden or by the sea; there is the endless consideration of the frustrations of life and the general inadequacy of the human struggle. There is talk, rising and flowing like the off-stage sound of waves; there is brittle talk; young talk and very old talk; there is funny talk, profound talk and sad talk. But the old Chekhov formula is always present, strangling the action like a wisteria tree: nothing really happens.

"MUST anything happen?" asks a Chekhovite from the rear of the auditorium. Yes, I say, not in the terms of duels, murder and arson, but in the transmission of some emotional stimulus that will excite me.

It can be done with words, and Mr. Hunter has a prodigious supply, but as he had them assembled last night I'm afraid they failed to strike an important nerve. One was seldom moved.

Point of Play

The point of his pastel appeared to be the immutable nature of life, the inexorable demands of time. He has Hume Cronyn, an ambitious and dedicated career man in the British Foreign Office; Jessica Tandy, an attractive widow adjusted to a lonely life after the loss of two husbands; Dennis King, a mildewed doctor, who has long since discovered the futility of fighting the Big Battle and hence resorted to drink, and Aline MacMahon trying, as Cronyn's mother, to hold her son's world together in her own imperious and bumbling fashion. Then there are a couple of youngsters to express the hope of youth, and wonderful Halliwell Hobbs to portray the humorous futility of the octogenarian.

Cronyn had grown up with Tandy, and she was in love with him when he sailed away to save the world as a diplomat. Now he is back home, having been removed from a post in Paris because in his zeal he had become a bore and a bigot.

Aged forty, with his career suspended, he re-discovers Tandy and decides to marry her. But it is too late, and she is too wise. The final curtain falls on Cronyn and his mother planning what to do to improve the old homestead. He has accepted his inability to alter the fate of nations and is resigned to the vagaries of the future alone.

Incisive Direction

It seemed to me the entire cast was immaculate; there are two sets by Jay Krause revealing the Dorset countryside in bold simplicity. Sir Cedric Hardwicke directed with incisive understanding of the varied moods, the long lapses into unrelieved dialogue.

But neither the gifted players nor Sir Cedric were able to make me care over much about the problem, and here we are probably arriving at the old impasse between British and American audiences. This show was a big hit in London; I doubt that it will have the same success in New York. Why?

Impatience, probably. How many of us here are content to sit around after dinner and quietly discuss life for a couple of hours? Oh, YOU? Well, you'd better hurry right down to the ANTA Theatre and get a ticket for "A Day by the Sea," because YOU'LL have a good time.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

September 27, 1955

'A Day by the Sea' Opens at ANTA Theater

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

In the third act of "A Day by the Sea" at the ANTA Theater last night, Halliwell Hobbes announced, "I go on boring them, year after year."

The audience burst into wild applause.

This reaction was not directed at Mr. Hobbes, whose contribution to the evening was outstanding.

His comment seemed an unfortunately just description of the performance, in general.

"A Day by the Sea" is a great deal better play than it seems here. In London, with Thorndike, Gielgud and Richardson, it made a fascinating evening.

It is more a conversation piece than a drama. Mighty little happens. A group of people casually pass a day, which summons up an accounting of their pasts, and reveals the likelihood of their futures.

It is a work which needs most subtle performing. The actors have to be something, instead of doing anything. The current cast distrusts the author and acts too hard for its own good, or the play's.

Jessica Tandy is the most successful person in the company at evoking the kind of gentle spell the play wants. Her character has a life beyond the stage, with a past and future you understand.

She is resting after one dull contented marriage, and another tragic one. She is a woman of no great virtues, except an uncomfortable understanding of herself. She is honest. A beautiful performance.

Hume Cronyn plays the man who now would like to marry her, 20 years too late. He is a pompous, intolerant moralizer, whose smug industriousness has ruined his life.

The actor plays the role with such intentness that you rather miss the needed feeling that he might have been a pleasanter, happier person.

Aline MacMahon is his mother, whose urges are all simple and domestic. Miss McMahon makes the character substantial, but denies some of its humorous aspects.

Dennis King sparks the evening in a most grateful manner with his bitter, raucous outbursts. He is a pensioner, a doctor kept in the household to look after an old man, which he does in an alcoholic manner.

Megs Jenkins gives a deeply touching performance, one of the play's very best, as a governess in love with the doctor. In her brief scenes she depicts an agony of frustration in a gentle woman.

Leo Britt is quiet but arresting as the visitor with bad professional news for the diplomat Cronyn plays.

If there is a theme to this play of N. C. Hunter's, it would seem to resemble what Eliot's "The Cocktail Party" once said: "Try to live with life as it is."

The New York Times

September 27, 1955

Theatre: Leisurely 'Day By the Sea'

N. C. Hunter's Comedy Arrives at ANTA

By BROOKS ATKINSON

N. C. HUNTER is a leisurely writer with a lot of charm, skill and taste. "A Day By the Sea," which was put on at the ANTA Theatre last evening, is pleasantly written, shrewdly directed and brilliantly acted.

In London Mr. Hunter's miniature comedies have formidable casts. "A Day By the Sea" stunned the audience with Sybil Thorndike, Lewis Casson, John Gielgud, Ralph Richardson, Irene Worth and other celebrated players, all dazzling each other with wonder and excitement.

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But it is doubtful that they gave a finer performance than the one Cedric Hardwicke had staged for America. As a dull-minded British civil servant—Hume Cronyn; as an opportunistic widow with decent scruples—Jessica Tandy; as a cheerful, bibulous doctor who is on the skids—Dennis King; as a strong-minded mother who manages everyone—Aline MacMahon; as a crotchety, old man who looks forward to the end of an amiable life—Halliwell Hobbes; as a governess who longs for a family of her own—Megs Jenkins.

Mr. Hunter writes parts that are probably not difficult to act. For that he deserves the blessing of the audience as well as of the actors. In the current instance his benevolence toward the actors brings its own reward. For the tenuous, loosely strung performance is admirable and enjoyable — humorous, touching, gentle, wistful and wise in a sociable way.

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To call a playwright "Chekhovian" today is to utter opprobium and to consign him to the doghouse. For "Chekhovian" has come to be a synonym for preciousness and langour. By writing without pressure, Mr. Hunter virtually invites that description. Some of his "Chekhovianisms" are no doubt deliberate.

But the word is not applied to him maliciously in this column. For he is a reflective writer in his own right. The dawdling pace, the improvised narrative, the characterizations of people who associate but never blend, the random remarks—are methods of style that become him. In "A Day By the Sea," as in the previous case of "Waters of the Moon," they result in a subtle, civilized comedy. His mind is less sharp than E. M. Forster's. But he has a similar sense of the comic muddle of life. The characters are intelligent and behave rationally. But most of them haven't the slightest idea of what they are doing.

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In the lazy flow of his narrative there is one basic situation that might almost be a plot. The civil servant at the age of 40 finds that he is a bore and that his capacity for hard work has merely antagonized his department. Instead of depressing him this unpleasant news sets him free. He decides to marry the girl of his youth. Unfortunately, she has already been married twice and no longer has his capacity for believing what is pleasant. He is disappointed. But he is not without resources. He decides to landscape his mother's house by the sea in Dorset.

There is a lot more to Mr. Hunter's comedy. The governess, who is a lonely failure, yearns for the doctor, who is a contented failure. The old people have their memories and irritations with which to amuse themselves and entertain the audience.

It is all done in a low key with the accent on the negative. But the writing is droll and the insight into character is clear. In his stage direction Mr. Hardwicke has manged to convey one of Mr. Hunter's most elusive ideas: that people united socially are separate in their souls. Despite a lot of words, there is very little communication between them.

In London the cast may have been more illustrious. Dollars to doughnuts that it penetrated no deeper into the heart of Mr. Hunter's play.

Daily Mirror

September 27, 1955

Robert Coleman's THEATRE:

'Day by Sea' Shows How Tastes Differ

• London has time for the leisurely, but we want things to start popping fast.

The British are a patient people. That's probably why N. C. Hunter's "A Day by the Sea" ran for some 18 months in England. It is a play that depends on characterization and dialogue for such impact as it possesses. American audiences are apt to find it less than gripping.

HUNTER MUST KNOW his Chekhov by heart, for "A Day by the Sea" is definitely fashioned in the tradition of the eminent Russian. It has to do with aging, ineffectual and frustrated people. We found them fascinating. Their talk is bitter, but polite and intelligent. However, there is no theatrical magic to it all.

There is an ambitious, hard-working young diplomat, who lacks the human touch. He seeks to find a measure of compromise in marriage to a childhood sweetheart, who now has two children and an unhappy past. A kindly mother devoted to her son and an elderly, crotchety relative. A cynical, verbose doctor who hits the bottle. And a governess who would wed him to escape an old maid's existence.

When you leave the ANTA Theatre, you do so with the feeling everyone is just about where he started. Nothing electrifying has happened. The speech has been rewarding, but the drama has been lacking. Hunter has penned an essentially static play about restless people. You like them, but they get on your nerves after a bit.

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HUNTINGTON Hartford and Stephen Mitchell have given **"A Day by the Sea" a good production.** Director Cedric Hardwicke has put about as much action into the script as it appears possible to do. Jay Krause has designed serviceable settings that are a bit harsh in color. Perhaps it's due to the lighting.

That veteran scene stealer, Dennis King, is at it again. As the disillusioned medico, who likes people but doesn't think much of the human race, he etches a brilliant, warm and yet sardonic portrait. Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn are excellent as the once youthful romantics who find it's too late to go back, to recapture the spark that is irretrievably lost.

Halliwell Hobbes, as a feeble man doddering and dreaming of the mountains he once climbed, is as right as rain. He is a sort of Greek chorus who wants people to talk up, to do something to relieve the monotony. Aline MacMahon is moving as a compassionate matriarch. And there are helpful performances by Megs Jenkins, Leo Britt and John W. Austin.

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"A DAY BY THE SEA," in sum, emphasizes again the differences between the London and New York stages. They have time for the leisurely over there, but we do not on this side of the Atlantic. We want things to start popping immediately, and keep exploding continuously. In other words, we want drama. Lots of it.

Civilized, observant dialogue is not enough. Interesting characters are not enough, even when brought to life by first-rate players. Hunter has penned a work of insight that could have been absorbing, but seldom is.

"Henry IV, Part I"

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

September 22, 1955

Brattle Group Performs 'Henry IV' in Splendor

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Frequent splendor lights up the production of Shakespeare's "Henry IV, Part I," by the Brattle Theater at the City Center.

The physical scheme is simple, but the civil struggle whirls along in sky and sea blues and gold and crimson.

The play itself gets a respectable performance by this company. It is done with love, which is all to the good. Last night it had not all the gusto it deserves.

Groups of Men.

The historical drama is concerned with two groups of men at odds over the question of who is rightful King of England.

This is no small issue. As might be expected, it starts a lot of fighting and causes a lot of men to kill each other.

When people get that angry at each other, they usually lose their tempers. The result is shouting and fierceness and nervous violence of manner, even before swords are drawn.

The Brattle group is a shade too polite about this war. They have everything worked out nicely for the movement, and a neat physical panorama to watch.

Now what they ought to do is forget they are playing a classic and yell their heads off.

They could speed things up, too. The way they played last night, nobody is itching enough for a scrap.

Falstaff Well Done.

Of the component parts of 'Henry IV," nothing is more of an actor's plum than the role of Falstaff. The bibulous, blubbery faker is often considered the best character part of its age and weight that was ever written.

Jerome Kilty acquits himself with honors. His Falstaff is a lovable phony, posturing, transparent and resourceful.

The two youthful contenders for the throne, the Prince of Wales and Hotspur, are acted by Michael Wager and Bryant Haliday. Both create aristocrats. They have the noble elegance that suggests regality.

Neither is much of a warrior, though, until he actually gets his sword in his hand and starts chasing his enemy.

Positive Attack.

Paul Sparer scores as Glendower because his attack on the role is so positive. And a similar assertiveness makes Clayton Corzatte stand out as Vernon.

The ladies are briefly seen in this "Henry," but they are very welcome. Jan Farrand plays Lady Percy with engaging sly humor, and Cavada Humphrey is most touching as the Welsh-speaking Lady Mortimer. Peggy Cass makes Quickly ring out over the footlights with spirit and bluntness.

"HENRY IV, PART I"

Revival of the comedy by William Shakespeare; staged by Jerome Kilty; scenery by Robert O'Hearn; presented by the Brattle Shakespeare Players under the auspices of the New York City Center Theatre Company (Jean Dalrymple, director) at the City Center, September 21, 1955. The cast:

Henry IV.....Thayer David
Earl of Westmoreland..Jay Lanin
Prince John of Lancaster.....
David Bowen
Sir Richard Vernon.....
Clayton Corzatte
Archbishop of Wells..Morris Hunt
Prince of Wales...Michael Wager
Sir John Falstaff...Jerome Kilty
Edward Pons.....Lester Rawlins
Earl of Northumberland.....
Larkin Ford
Hotspur.....Bryant Haliday
Peto.....Arthur Malet
Bardolph.....John Peters
Gadshill.....Wood Romoff
First Traveler....James Oberlin
Lady Percy.....Jan Farrand
Hotspur's Messenger..Alan Coates
Francis.....Albert Corbin
Mistress Quickly....Peggy Cass
Sheriff.....Pernell Roberts
Earl of March.....John Harkins
Owen Glendower....Paul Sparer
Lady Mortimer..Cavada Humphrey

DAILY NEWS
September 22, 1955

Brattle Players Flub 'Henry IV, Part 1,' at the N.Y. City Center

By JOHN CHAPMAN

The play about Jack Falstaff which Shakespeare called "Henry IV," and which later had a "Part 1" tacked onto it, wasn't very good or very funny last evening at the City Center. The Brattle Shakespeare players, who did so well with "Othello," couldn't get going on this one.

It is rather a dull, windy and confusing drama, being a mixture of military politics and the affairs of Falstaff and his tosspot friends, and it has been made more dull, windy and confusing by the actors. In their first performance, with an exception here and there, they rolled their r's and eyes and were unintelligible about half the time. I think they were trying too hard to speak Shakespeare clearly when they should have sought to speak it easily. Whenever they came to a word with an r in it they sounded like Mel Allen saying "Strike thrrrrree."

A Good Hotspur

Jerome Kilty directed the performance and also played Falstaff. He was properly padded and looked like a fat old guzzler, but, as Margaret Webster has pointed out in her "Shakespeare Without Tears," a good Falstaff should think fat as well as be fat. Kilty sounded like Clifton Webb clipping out some lines by Noel Coward.

Two of the better performances were given by Bryant Haliday as Hotspur and Michael Wager as the Prince of Wales. The title role falls to Thayer David, an elocutioner. Jan Farrand brings good looks, a nice smile and a few gay little laughs to the part of Hotspur's wife. Shakespeare wives never do amount to much, anyway, except Lady Macbeth. Katherine did just fine as a character until she consented to marry Petruchio, and then she began getting dull.

New York Post

September 22, 1955

By Richard Watts Jr.

Falstaff and the Prince of Wales

The considerable merits of the Brattle Shakespeare Players are shown at their best in "Henry IV," Part One, which followed "Othello" at the City Center last night. The enterprising visitors from Cambridge, Mass., are happiest when expressing their talent for slashing, straightforward dramatic action, without too much attention to lyric eloquence, and this rich and varied chronicle of taverns, palaces and battlefields, with its political conspiracies, hand-to-hand combats, and roistering comedy, brings out all that is most vigorous and attractive in their acting.

Although the play's detailed contemplation of dynastic politics and civil war in embroiled 15th-century England will probably always make it seem rather specialized fare for American theatergoers, the sheer variety of its action, the hearty exuberance of its comedy, and the richness of its portraiture provide it with a superb vitality that is always welcome. Above all, of course, it has Falstaff, and, while there is a modern suspicion of Shakespeare's comic characters, old Sir John is so gigantic a figure of fun that he defies any changes in standards of humor.

A production of "Henry IV" stands to a great extent on the playing of what is truly an immortal role, but there are at least two other parts that must be properly managed to make a production of the chronicle drama satisfactory. When the play isn't about Falstaff, it is about the conflicting characters of the young antagonists in the rebellion against the King. The ardent and passionate Hotspur, headstrong, fiery, heroic and foolish, and Prince Hal, the gay boon companion with a coldly calculating mind, are dramatic figures of stature and interest.

All three men are, I think, effectively played in the Brattle presentation. The Falstaff is Jerome Kilty, and, while Mr. Kilty doesn't manage to give the drunken, cowardly and delightful old fellow quite the epic size that goes with his outrageousness, he acts him with humor, warmth and a good sense of character. I think he is at his best in the fat knight's sheepish moments, when he is being exposed and mocked by his young companion, Prince Hal, and is thinking up a reply to his taunts. The quality of Falstaff is there, if occasionally a bit muted.

The two young men are played by Michael Wager and Bryant Haliday, and both of them are excellent. I suspect that Mr. Wager, as Hal, the Prince of Wales, has rather the more difficult part, because Falstaff's boon companion is a complex and basically cold-hearted man, while Hotspur is all ardor and passion, and Mr. Haliday gives him all of the romantic dash that can be so attractive on the stage. But there is no reason to pick between the two young actors, and it should be enough to say that the contrasting roles are played with fine skill and understanding.

The other characters may be of less importance, but all of them demand competent playing, and it seems to me that they received it last night. I especially liked Paul Sparer as the fatuous Glendower, Pernell Roberts as the belligerent Douglas and Arthur Malet as the idiotic Peto, but Thayer David in the title role and Lester Rawlins as Worcester are also excellent. This production of the Shakespearean chronicle won't erase memories of the Old Vic performance that created such a stir here shortly after the war, but it is fresh and interesting.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune
September 22, 1955

THEATER

'Henry IV, Part 1'

By WALTER F. KERR

I'D NEVER have believed the night would come when I'd pay more attention to the complicated political shenanigans of "Henry IV, Part One" than to its knockabout comedy sequences.

I did Wednesday, though. There on the City Center stage was that old bore the Earl of Westmoreland and, bore that he is, he seemed a veritable jewel of delight under the circumstances. There, too, was the Earl of Northumberland, prattling away and seeming a godsend. Sir Richard Vernon was a positive breeze, and even the Archbishop of Wells was a welcome sight.

All this because a man has to have something to do while he is sitting in the theater, and there just wasn't any way of laughing at Falstaff, Bardolph, Hal and the rest of the back-room bunch.

Just why such a reverent hush settled over everything Shakespeare threw in by way of liveliness is a bit of a mystery. The Brattle Theater group, here for a short visit after some seasons in Cambridge, is an intelligent and likable outfit. Jerome Kilty (Falstaff) has brightened up many a minor passage in a Broadway play, Michael Wager (Hal) has proved himself an engaging juvenile in routine light comedy, and the costumes that Robert Fletcher has made for all Britain have a lot of red-and-blue vitality on their own.

* * *

But sorry and silent is the passage up Gadshill, long-winded and weary the nights at the Old Boar's Head. Mr. Kilty is picturesque enough to look at: discovered asleep behind a pleasantly-painted arras, he is a full, fuzzy moon of wispy white hair. He promises to be funny as he kneels at a prie-dieu, and he at last gets a laugh or two out of the "what is honor?" speech. But between these two points—the distance is a vast one—the actor seems to be concentrating so hard on pronouncing "account" as though it were "accyount," and on exploding the final 'p's in a word like "Eastcheap" that he has no energy left for the rowdy man behind the syllables.

* * *

Falstaff stamps his foot petulantly when he is accused of one or another of his sins, and he can barely get his breath between the oaths that fly out of him. But the flesh is simulated, and the spirit sleeps. Here is no outrageous man, capable of lying for the sheer esthetic pleasure of it, but a fumbling and essentially silly man, capable of hiding wistfully behind a

bench when he is caught out in a howler. He is, in short, an unimpressive scoundrel.

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Michael Wager's Hal is effective only when this princeling is suddenly sober. Let the lights come down during the revelry and Hal deliver a speech about his plans for future reform, and a flash of sincerity is felt out front.

But this Hal is a sort of Puritan fifth columnist among the Eastcheap back alleys. You do believe in his intended reform; in fact, you feel that he is only spying on his drinking companions, but he has never honestly had an easy or affable moment with the outfit. Mr. Wager hasn't an expansive touch: though he forces a smile while the boys are whooping it up, his heart really belongs to his daddy.

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The party is a bit of a frost, then. It has its occasional spurts: I thought that Peggy Cass was quite funny while she was gargling odd noises in an effort to drown out Falstaff's snores, that Bryant Haliday and Jan Farrand managed to squeeze at least some of the comedy out of Hotspur's home life, and that Cavada Humphrey and John Harkins added a genial domestic note to the leavetaking in Glendower's Castle.

But I like to think that Shakespeare knew what he was doing when he kept Hal a juvenile delinquent for so long: he was making it up to us for all the politics. This "Henry" makes politics seem positively gay.

Daily Mirror

September 22, 1955

Robert Coleman's THEATRE:

'Henry IV' Excellent At the City Center

• Brattle Players present Shakespeare with momentum, effectiveness.

The Brattle Shakespeare Players gave us an excellent "Henry IV, Part I," at the City Center Wednesday evening. Though it got off to a slow start, it soon gathered the momentum necessary for Elizabethan effectiveness. This was a theatre of swift and agile speech, demanding keen ears from the customers.

Though "Henry IV" may not be regarded as one of the Bard's masterpieces, it is, in our book, a right swell play, one that we shall continue to relish until someone comes along to do better by its materials. And that will be the day! For even so-so Shakespeare has the mark of greatness upon it.

THIS CHRONICLE play is an absorbing mixture of history and comedy. It takes up where "Richard II" left off. As Bolingbroke dethroned Richard, so the proud and dashing Henry Percy and his allies would do to Bolingbroke, now Henry IV. Henry is disappointed in his roistering son, Prince Hal.

For Hal is a playboy, a frequenter of taverns and an associate of the braggart Sir John Falstaff, assorted wenches and cutpurses. It is these characters who give "Henry IV" a picaresque charm. However, when duty calls, the disreputable Hal proves himself a man and his determined father's son. He vanquishes the younger Percy, the capable Hotspur.

Jerome Kilty doubles in brass as director and as Falstaff. He makes the fat Knight a lisping, blustering, boastful rogue. If he isn't the best we have ever seen in the role, he has ample merits. He does it justice, and we'll go along with him as the current champ in the part until another venturesome star bests him in honorable competition.

BRYANT HALIDAY is a bold and engaging Hotspur. He moves with facility and has vocal resource. We were particularly taken with Paul Sparer's dour, shrewd and admirably spoken Glendower, as we had been previously with his Cassio in "Othello." Michael Wager is an ingratiating and understandable Prince Hal. He manages the transition from profligacy to responsibility convincingly.

Thayer David, obviously hampered by a cold, was nevertheless a good Henry IV. His indictment of his wastrel son and explanation of his own position were indeed rewarding. Stanley Jay, as the knavish Poins, has style and resonant speech. Salutes are also due Jan Farrand, Cavada Humphrey, Peggy Cass, Lester Rawlins, Larkin Ford, John Harkins and Pernell Roberts.

For years now, the Brattle Players have been keeping alive the classics in Cambridge, Mass. From time to time members of the troupe have graced Broadway productions. Probably to earn the wherewithal to maintain the integrity of their fine company near the banks of the Charles.

ON LIMITED RESOURCES, they have staged demanding works with taste, skill and imagination. They have made their dollars go a long way. It's good to have the Brattle Players with us at the City Center, lending a note of distinction to this season. And we hope they will return to us again next Fall. We recommend them to you warmly. Would that there were more groups like them.

Journal-American

September 22, 1955

Field Day For Falstaff

Jerome Kilty's Acting Tops Fine Effort by Brattle Players

By JOHN McCLAIN

THE STORY OF HENRY IV, Part I, which was aired at the City Center by the Brattle Players last night, was perhaps Shakespeare's most raucous and uninhibited historical classic. Here we have Falstaff, the obese recalcitrant, defiant of all codes of morality or conventional behavior, stacked up against a character named Hotspur, who represents everything glamorous in the world of chivalry and personal dignity.

The situation, which has been used largely since in various forms, affords fertile grounds for comedy and drama.

There is Hal, Prince of Wales, a convenient vehicle to serve as sounding board between the other principals, just in case somebody like The King wants to bounce a speech around. And there are, of course, Lady Percy (Hotspur's wife), Mistress Quickly, and Glendower, to add flavor to the stew.

But it pretty much comes back to Falstaff to carry the show, and in this instance I thought that Jerome Kilty, who played the part and also directed, ran away with it. I mean there didn't seem to be enough emphasis on the role of Hotspur, certainly adequately interpreted by Bryant Holiday, to make the contrast come to life. Sure, it was a field day for Falstaff, but I thought the situations could have been accented by more strength and definition in the deploy of the subordinates.

Michael Wager is certainly an acceptable Hal; Thayer David is an experienced and convincing King; Jan Farrand is engaging in her limited moments as Hotspur's wife; Peggy Cass has a pleasant scene as Mistress Quickly — and so on. The cast is skilled and assured. It's just that one hoped for a more delicate balance between the elements which can make "Henry" a studious and, at the same time, hilarious consideration of British history.

Production-wise, Jean Dalrymple has turned in a splendid job. Without any pretention she has given the cast bright and attractive costumes by Robert Fletcher; Robert O'Hearn's sets are suggestive and ingenious without being too stark. As in "Othello" characters enter and exit by a runway from the orchestra pit, and nobody seems to mind.

This will not be the greatest presentation of "Henry IV, Part I," but it certainly rates the patronage of any serious student of drama. Even those who were privileged to see Marciano beat Moore at the Yankee Stadium last night.

The New York Times
September 22, 1955

Theatre: Henry IV, Part 1

Brattle Players Stage Second Drama Here

By BROOKS ATKINSON

IN "Henry IV, Part 1," which was put on at the City Center last evening, Jerome Kilty plays Sir John Falstaff. He has also staged the performance.

That fact is mentioned here because it probably has some bearing on the uneven quality of the production. The scenes in which Falstaff appears are breathless and shapeless. The scenes in which he does not appear are the ones that capture the spirit of Shakespeare's play.

For it is not a vaudeville. It has spirit. It dramatizes the inflammatory subject of the legitimacy of the royal succession. It also touches on the rueful subject of a father who feels that he has lost the devotion of his son, and a son who at length regrets his follies. Amid all the hugger-mugger of a lusty show in "Henry IV, Part 1," there are a couple of themes that Shakespeare, as a loyal subject, felt deeply about.

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Having finished with "Othello," the Brattle Shakespeare Players, as they call themselves, have moved on to a less compact drama that gives them more trouble. There are some vivid scenes in it. Take, for instance, the blunt, intimate scene in which the King upbraids the Prince for his cheap, unroyal revelries. Thayer David, as the King, and Michael Wager, as the Prince, make something honest and moving out of it.

Or the ranting scene in which Hotspur taunts the Welsh Owen Glendower, and the young conspirators take leave of their wives to go to battle. Throughout the play, Bryant Haliday is a superb Hotspur—hot-headed, reckless, brutally frank and arrogant. And Paul Sparer, who refreshes the performance with a vigorous voice, is no less animated and lucid as Glendower.

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The actors are at their best in these scenes, as they are also in the confrontation of King and rebels just before the battle and in other martial situations. Note that they are the scenes in which Falstaff is not the central figure. They are the ones about which Mr. Kilty could be most objective. They are the ones in which he has got to the heart of the drama and found a story.

The scenes in which Mr. Kilty plays Falstaff are less cohesive. They are diffuse. They also affect a jollity that does not spring out of the acting. Mr. Kilty's Falstaff could do with a little direction. For there is more to that tun-bellied rogue than obese brawling. There is a crafty mind under the lard—sixty years of experience in conniving and cheating. By concentrating on the bulk Mr. Kilty skimps on the character.

Nor is Mr. Wager's Prince Harry at his best in the scenes with Falstaff. He is attractive, but he lacks guile. In the Boar's Head Tavern carousals Mr. Wager stays on the surface of the character. But the Prince is not a one-dimensional young man. There is a rasp in him somewhere. His defiance of his father, his rejection of responsibility motivate his unprincely behavior. Prince Hall is one of the most lovable of Shakespeare's characters because he dislikes to conform. Mr. Wager does not resolve the whole character in the comic scenes.

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Again, Robert O'Hearn's settings are useful and sufficient. Although some of Robert Fletcher's costumes look too heavy for comfortable acting, they are beautiful and decorative. But the inner vitality of "Henry IV, Part I" has somehow escaped the Brattle Players. The direction is not thorough. Serving in the two capacities of director and principal actor, Mr. Kilty has left unfinished the scenes in which he appears.

"Othello"

New York Post
September 8, 1955

By Richard Watts Jr.

The Brattle Players in 'Othello'

The Brattle Players from Cambridge, Mass., opened New York's Shakespearean season last night by bringing to the City Center their workmanlike presentation of "Othello." Their production sacrifices the grandeur of the play's lyric beauty in the interest of its straightforward dramatic movement, is clearly rather than eloquently spoken, has a great deal of vigor and vitality, is more forceful in its early scenes than in its later sections, and rarely manages to reach the heights of tragic intensity. In general, I think it is interesting but far from overwhelming.

It starts out admirably, and the early scenes between the crafty Iago and his dupe, Roderigo, and the baiting of Michael Cassio into drunkenness and brawling are managed with an admirable gusto that gives promise of brilliant things to come. The favorable impression thus created is helped on by the appearance of Othello, who, in the person of William Marshall, a splendid giant of a man, has an authentically heroic air. My impression was that things were less exciting when Iago's plot got under way, but the original interest was never completely destroyed.

William Marshall

Mr. Marshall, who made such a favorable local impression when he played the magnificent central role in the revival of "The Green Pastures," not only possesses that heroic presence but has a powerful and dramatic voice, and he is entirely convincing as soldier, lover and guileless victim of an evil plotter. But I thought his voice, striking and splendid though it is, was rather lacking in moving dramatic eloquence and that he was considerably more touching when saying simply, "The pity of it, Iago," than in his later scenes of tragic intensity.

"Othello" must stand or fall as much on the playing of the part of Iago as on the characterization of the title role, and here again I'm afraid I had rather mixed emotions. Jerome Kilty, the current Iago, is an excellent actor, and he makes Shakespeare's monstrous villain a proper figure of malevolence, hypocrisy and treachery. But, while he is a plausible scoundrel, he is not exactly a subtle one, and what troubled me a bit was that his malignance was more that of a routine villain than of a man who made villainy a kind of joyous lyric art.

Desdemona and Others

The Desdemona of the Brattle production is played by Jan Farrand, a stalwart of the organization, and, as I'm afraid I usually do, I found Miss Farrand competent, intelligent and not very moving. Michael Wager, a good young actor, succeeded admirably in making the spineless Roderigo an entirely real figure. Paul Sparer, too, managed to give credibility and a touch of strength to the part of the innocent and much-put upon Cassio, and, after a slow start, Cavada Humphrey managed the final scene of Iago's vengeful wife effectively.

If the entire production had kept up the air of dramatic vitality that marked the earlier scenes, I don't think I would have so minded what seemed to me the intentional disinclination to emphasize the musical quality of one of the mightiest of lyric tragedies. But "Othello" is so filled with sheer verbal beauty that it does seem a shame that so much of it is sacrificed in the interest of the melodrama. The Brattle Players have provided so much competence and intelligence that they lead one to expect a little more than what they finally offer.

"OTHELLO"

Revival of the play by William Shakespeare; staged by John Stix; settings by Robert O'Hearn; costumes by Robert Fletcher; presented by the Brattle Shakespeare Players under the auspices of the New York City Center Theatre Company (Jean Dalrymple, director) at the City Center, September 7, 1955. The cast:

Roderigo.....Michael Wager
Iago.....Jerome Kilty
Brabantio.....Thayer David
Othello.....William Marshall
Cassio.....Paul Sparer
Officer.....John Harkins
Duke of Venice....Arthur Malet
Gratiano.....Larkin Ford
Lodovico.....Lester Rawlins
Desdemona.....Jan Farrand
Montano.....Pernell Roberts
Sailor.....William Landis
Officer.....Stanley Jay
Emilia.....Cavada Humphrey
Bianca.....Peggy Cass

The New York Times
September 8, 1955

The Theatre: 'Othello'

Visitors From Cambridge Excel in First of 2 Shakespearean Dramas They Will Offer

By BROOKS ATKINSON

THANKS to a group of actors from Cambridge, Mass., an excellent performance of "Othello" has come to the City Center, where it opened Wednesday evening.

They are the actors who ordinarily play at the Brattle Theatre in Cambridge. "Othello," which they staged there last July, is the first of the two Shakespeare productions they are bringing to New York this month. Under the direction of John Stix, it is a traditional production with useful scenery designed by Robert O'Hearn and beautiful costumes by Robert Fletcher. Mr. Stix is no revolutionary as a director.

But "Othello" is the most compact and driving of the tragedies in the Shakespeare canon, and Mr. Stix' actors have got it on the stage. If it is a little perfunctory and formal in the first act, it becomes more concise in the second; and it is thoroughly engrossing at the end. None of the acting is magnificent. But all of it gets to the point without flourishes or pedantry. You can forget the acting in the dramatic turbulence of the work as a whole.

In this column's opinion, neither the Othello nor the Iago is above critical reproach. As Othello, William Marshall has a grand, towering figure and a resonant baritone voice. But he seems to have little capacity for articulating words or syllables. There is no music in his speech; worse than that, there are only occasional sentences or phrases. As Iago, Jerome Kilty is alert and interesting. But honesty sits on his face like the heritage of a good family. There is little or the intellectual cunning and malicious craft of the schemer in Mr. Kilty's genial acting.

Such is the conviction of the performance as a whole that these rather serious defects do not impair the tragedy of the simple Moor who trusts clever people. Jan Farrand's Desdemona is admirable — sweet, intelligent, sensitive and modest. Although Miss Farrand is a talented actress with lots of technique, she does not feature the part. She plays it dramatically, like an actress participating in a sound, group performance.

As Iago's wife, Cavada Humphrey brings an astonishing sense of horror and rebellion into the last scene, when it is fresh and tingling. Michael Wager's impressionable, vacillating Roderigo could hardly be better, even to his easy command of the English language. In the part of Cassio, Paul Sparer is first-rate. Playing an accomplished man of the world, he has grace and presence and a pleasant voice for the lines of Shakespeare. As Lodovico and Montano, Lester Rawlins and Pernell Roberts, respectively, give capital supporting performances.

In all conscience, this "Othello" begins tamely. It sounds like the prologue to a respectable, cultivated revival of a stage classic. It looks as though good breeding were going to triumph over a rattling good drama. But "Othello" is a good drama, full of intrigue and character assassination.

As the story gathers momentum, the performance becomes leaner and more intense. Would that Mr. Marshall could speak the words intelligibly, and would that Mr. Kilty could be more subtly malevolent. But no matter, really. For the last act is vibrant with horror and remorse. The Brattle Theatre players have style and a feeling of enthusiasm for an exciting stage work.

New York World-Telegram
and
The Sun

September 8, 1955

City Center Presents 'Othello'

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

The Brattle Theater extracted the sting from "Othello" before it presented the sinister tragedy at the City Center.

Theirs is a respectable enough production of Shakespeare's magnetic play. It just never gets off the ground. "Othello" should be as fascinating as a poisonous snake. In this case it coils not, neither does it spring.

There are two ways for a youthful group of players to try Shakespeare. They can reach for his heights, at the risk of valiant failure. Or they can hack the play down, in manner and sound, to the size of their known capacities.

Physique and Voice.

The group has not aimed high enough this time to have the maximum fun their project promised. And it can be fun, for actor and audience alike, because "Othello" is one of the greatest thrillers ever written.

The style of this production is informal and workaday, where it should be majestic.

In the title role, William Marshall has two priceless attributes for his assignment. He is fine-looking and has the physical splendor the Moor should have. And he has a deep musical organ of a voice.

Lacks Emotional Range.

Very few actors ever acquire the emotional range for this monumental role. Marshall does not yet have it. The bricks are there to build the part, but they lack the mortar of transitions. There is no cumulative fund of passion.

Despite this episodic attack, Marshall makes an imposing figure who keeps one's sympathy, and makes the love story convincing.

Jerome Kilty plays Iago, in much too contemporary and casual a manner for his villainy to excite the onlooker. He has the impish malice of a square-dance caller about to deliberately confuse his customers.

An Able Cassio.

Jan Farrand is acceptable as Desdemona, a role in which it is hard for anyone less than a genius to be impressive. Paul Sparer gives one of the evening's best performances as the duped Cassio. He is inclined to crumple physically in un-Shakespearean manner, but he plays with unleashed passion, something this drama needs more than it gets.

Cavada Humphrey rather overstyles Emilia, until you watch her when you should be paying attention somewhere else. Her big final scene has genuine excitement in a welcome if tardy stimulation.

Michael Wager makes a consistent worrier of Roderigo. One might quarrel with his petulant interpretation of the role. Effective as it is, in itself, it pulls up serious roots of the drama.

The physical production is extraordinarily effective, for its simplicity. A trio of arches adapt themselves, with various props, to all the scenes. The murder bed has a grand sweep to its draperies.

DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER

September 8, 1955

William Marshall Impressive in Stirring 'Othello' Performance

By JOHN CHAPMAN

The Brattle Players' production of "Othello," which opened last evening at the City Center, is a lucid, well-built and altogether stirring performance of Shakespeare's great tragedy. In it, William Marshall makes a magnificent Othello, and he is surrounded by a company which, under the clear-headed direction of John Stix, wisely leaves all the heroics to Shakespeare as it goes about its business.

The last Othello I saw was Paul Robeson's and Robeson, with his great physique and magnificent voice, made him memorable. Marshall, too, has a great physique and another magnificent voice—and is, I fancy, a more gifted actor. There is the intelligence of a stage craftsman in what he does—in how he measures his voice and his movements all through the performance. I have only one small complaint, about his turning his back occasionally on someone to whom he is talking. This may be director Stix' doing, and not Marshall's.

Upstanding Performances

The Brattle Players, from up Harvard way, are a well-balanced company. Jerome Kilty is a highly satisfying Iago, smooth and sinister—but not too smooth and sinister. Since Iago is one of the fattest roles in all drama, almost any actor able to talk can make an impression in it of one sort or another. Kilty makes the right impression, in my mind.

There is another upstanding piece of playing by Michael Wager as Roderigo and an interesting one by Paul Sparer as Cassio. Arthur Malet gives an impressive little characterization in the bit about the Duke of Venice.

Hapless Desdemona

Jan Farrand, the Desdemona, is fair and lovely indeed, but she is not quite a match for Marshall, emotionally, in her final despairing scene. But Shakespeare himself didn't do too much for the poor girl, giving her little to do in most of the drama except to say "Yes, my lord" and "I am an obedient wife, my lord." Shakespeare did a little better, methinks, toward Emilia, Desdemona's servant, giving her a better share of the plot and a fine end-of-the-play scene. Emilia is most capably played by Cavada Humphrey.

Robert O'Hearn's settings are Elizabethan in their simplicity, allowing maximum use of the full stage and providing for swift and easy movement. The costumes by Robert Fletcher are Venetian rather than Elizabethan in character. He has outfitted Marshall in a strikingly dramatic cloak, and has equipped Iago with a pair of black gauntlets, which seem to have become the mark of the villain ever since Jack Palance played the baddy in "Shane."

Journal American
NEW YORK'S NEWSPICTURE NEWSPAPER

September 8, 1955

Auspicious Production

Powerful Acting in Leading Roles Gives Force to City Center Drama

By JOHN McCLAIN

"OTHELLO," one of Shakespeare's great tragedies, has always leaned heavily on the services of powerful acting in the roles of both Othello and Iago if it is to be moving and plausible, and the City Center Theatre Company which last night presented the Brattle Players in the drama can be thankful these two parts were handled with distinction.

For William Marshall is a towering and authoritative Othello, and Jerome Kilty brings a gift for clear enunciation and stylized delivery to a characterization which can easily be dismissed for lack of motivation.

As you recall, the play itself is a raw exploration of such human failings as jealousy, suspicion and passion; there are few symbols and no ghosts, spirits or allegorical figures.

Fine Contrast

It's the simple tragedy of a human being caught in a plot which leads him to destroy his wife and himself. And if these elements are not exploited with force and conviction by the principals the whole thing becomes an improbable and ludicrous spectacle.

In the title role I thought Mr. Marshall made a rather slow start last night. Although a Moor, he is the general of the armies protecting Venice, and he should carry enormous authority from the beginning. It seemed he was a bit subservient at first, but on second thought this may have been his way of playing a contrast to the insane rage he is required to express later.

In any event, from the moment a suspicion of his wife's infidelity is brought home to him he takes complete charge and dominates the proceedings through the final death scene.

As Iago, Mr. Kilty succeeds in what seems to me to be the only possible interpretation of the part. There has never appeared to be any valid motive for anybody to sink to the depths of evil written into the role. For no good reason "Honest Iago" is determined to louse up everybody he can lay a hand on, and none of them is even vaguely suspicious of him (his wife included) until the closing moments of the play.

The result is apt to be that all the other characters emerge as stupid and gullible, unless Iago is somehow made to emerge as a sort of dramatic symbol—a figure frankly devised by the author to make his plot come off. In this I think Mr. Kilty struck the right balance between actor and entrepreneur.

Jan Farrand is a most decorative Desdemona, offering a forthright and fragile interpretation as the bride of the rampant Othello; Michael Wager presents a new and somewhat startling conception of Roderigo as a teenage Venetian delinquent; Paul Sparer is a sincere and engaging Cassio, and Cavada Humphrey is assured and audible as Emilia. The other members of the cast are uniformly reliant and capable.

Robert O'Hearn has devised a skilful arrangement of curtains and a permanent back set to simulate the interiors and exteriors of Venice and Cyprus, and Robert Fletcher has clothed his company in unpretentious good taste. I thought the direction by John Stix was ingenious and unobtrusive, the latter meant to be a sincere compliment.

"Othello" hasn't been seen hereabouts for much too long, and the City Center people are to be congratulated for such an auspicious return production.